

# ***Tobacco Health Disparities Update***

News from the Washington State Department of Health  
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

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## **Why a Bulletin on Tobacco-related Health Disparities?**

Tobacco use among people of low socioeconomic status and/or members of certain racial or ethnic populations is higher than for the general population. Often these groups also have less access to health care and other resources that would help them prevent and/or treat their illnesses, resulting in a disproportionate burden of tobacco-related disease and death.

In early 2003, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) completed its *Strategic Plan to Identify and Eliminate Tobacco-Related Health Disparities*. Since that time, the department's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program has launched a number of promising new activities to reduce tobacco use in high-risk and underserved populations.

The Tobacco Program is publishing this quarterly bulletin to keep community members and leaders informed of efforts to identify and eliminate tobacco-related health disparities. The bulletins will not provide extensive detail, but will be a quick way for the reader to:

- Understand the impact of tobacco use on high-risk and underserved populations.
- Become aware of the department's efforts to address tobacco-related health disparities.
- Join and/or contribute to DOH efforts to address tobacco-related and other health disparities.

Future issues will include stories on:

- Multicultural, community-based efforts to reduce tobacco use.
- New state data and data-gathering methods.
- Culturally specific media campaigns, materials, and programs.
- The Tobacco Program's efforts to become more culturally and community competent.

*We hope you will find this bulletin informative and useful, and we appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have. To suggest a story idea, submit a story, or be included in the mailing list for this publication, please email Alyssa Sampson at [resource@xculture.org](mailto:resource@xculture.org).*

### **Did You Know ...**

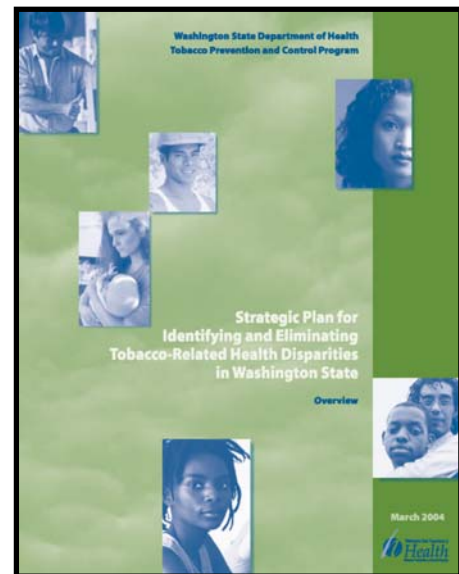
*Tobacco use is the nation's number one cause of preventable death, killing more people every year than AIDS, alcohol, drugs, murders, suicides, car crashes, and fires, combined.*



## An Overview of DOH's Plan for Reducing Tobacco Use in High-risk Groups

In April 2001, the Tobacco Program convened the Cross Cultural Workgroup on Tobacco, which included representatives from African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Latino, sexual minority, and rural communities.

After gathering input through community self-assessments, the workgroup identified critical issues in addressing tobacco-related health disparities, and agreed on 3- to 5-year goals to address those issues. This work is contained in the ***Strategic Plan to Identify and Eliminate Tobacco-Related Health Disparities***, published in March 2004.



Critical Issue	3- to 5 -Year Goals
Lack of sustained funding	Enhance and sustain DOH Tobacco Program commitment to address health disparities
Lack of outreach and access to programs and services	Increase community involvement, outreach, and access
Low priority of tobacco issues in high-risk communities	Increase community awareness of the dangers of tobacco use
Institutional racism	Improve cultural sensitivity of DOH Tobacco Program
Lack of focused resources	Provide culturally appropriate materials and services
Tobacco companies' targeting of high-risk communities	Reduce tobacco company influence

### Initial Activities

Upon completion of the *Strategic Plan to Identify and Eliminate Tobacco-Related Health Disparities*, the Tobacco Program began:

- Contracting with organizations in five high-risk populations to plan and implement activities in their own communities. Funding and training is provided to organizations within and/or serving these diverse communities and to statewide service providers to help identify strategies to address tobacco use and deliver services that are effective with the following populations:
  - African American
  - Asian American and Pacific Islander
  - Urban Indian
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender

- Providing funding to culturally diverse communities to help them build capacity (skills and knowledge) and leadership related to tobacco issues. This began with sponsorship of the Cross Cultural Leadership Institute, a cross-community leadership training retreat designed and implemented by the involved communities to engage community leaders in this important work.
- Working with statewide providers, such as WIC and First Steps, to help them provide cessation support for their clients.
- Working to improve the cultural competence of Washington Tobacco Quit Line services, currently available in English and Spanish.
- Improving data-gathering practices to obtain more culturally sensitive, accurate, and useful tobacco use information about high-risk populations



### **Advisory Committee**

The Cross Cultural Workgroup on Tobacco completed its work in August 2004. The Tobacco Program then recruited the Tobacco Disparities Advisory Group (TDAC) to guide the implementation of its disparities strategic plan. The new group currently includes former members of the Cross Cultural Workgroup on Tobacco and new members from a variety of community-based and government organizations. The advisory committee's quarterly meetings are facilitated by the Cross Cultural Health Care Program of Seattle.

## **Overview of the Washington State Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program**

Using funds from the Master Settlement Agreement with the tobacco companies, the Washington Department of Health launched an expanded Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in July 2000.

After five years of implementation, the Tobacco Program and its statewide partners have reduced the number of Washington kids smoking by about 65,000 (48 percent among 10<sup>th</sup> graders) and the number of adults smoking by 130,000 (13 percent).

However, there is much work to be done to reduce the burden of tobacco use on high-risk populations and those heavily targeted by tobacco companies (see the new state data in the January issue of this bulletin).

### **Tobacco Program Goals**

- Preventing youth from initiating tobacco use
- Increasing tobacco cessation
- Eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke
- Identifying and eliminating tobacco-related disparities in high-risk groups

## **Comprehensive and Integrated Approach**

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program works with local health agencies, tribes, schools, and community organizations to deliver integrated activities to all Washington residents. The activities are based on comprehensive, proven or promising, and cost-effective strategies.

*Community and Tribal Programs* – The state Department of Health funds tobacco prevention and control activities through local health departments and community organizations in all 39 Washington counties. In addition, the state funds anti-tobacco activities in 27 of the 29 federally recognized tribes, and in five high-risk communities.

*Public Awareness and Education* – The Tobacco Program's advertising campaign uses traditional media, such as television and radio advertising, to help adults quit smoking, prevent teens from starting, and educate the public about the dangers of secondhand smoke. The program also uses innovative community-based promotions to reach youth, young adults, and other high-risk populations targeted by tobacco industry marketing.

*School Programs* – The state's nine Educational Service Districts receive funding to focus primarily on grades 5-9 to help schools improve and enforce tobacco-free policies, establish stop-smoking programs for students, deliver research based curricula, train teachers and staff, and provide information to families.

*Quit Programs* – The Washington Tobacco Quit Line, funded by the Department of Health, provides residents with free one-on-one counseling, tobacco quit kits, and referrals to local stop-smoking programs. The program trains healthcare system providers to effectively intervene with their patients who are smokers, and to assist these patients in quitting.

*Policy and Enforcement* – The Department of Health promotes and supports the development and enforcement of tobacco-free policies. The department works with the state Attorney General, Liquor Control Board, and local agencies to enforce state and federal laws restricting tobacco sales and advertising to kids, and help develop community-based and workplace policies protecting against secondhand smoke.

*Assessment and Evaluation* – The Tobacco Program regularly collects and analyzes information on tobacco use among adults and youth in Washington. Overall program impact is assessed by comparing results to data collected before the program began and to national trends during the same period. The program also continually evaluates specific activities to measure their effectiveness.



For more information about the Tobacco Program's efforts to address disparities, visit <http://www.doh.wa.gov/TOBACCO/DISPARITIES/DISPARITY.HTM>